

## Highlights of the Public Libraries Survey

The following are highlights taken from the E.D. Tabs "Public Libraries in the United States FY 1996" released in February 1999.

### *Number of Public Libraries and Their Service Outlets and Legal Basis*

- There were 8,946 public libraries (administrative entities) in the 50 states and the District of Columbia in 1996.
- Eleven percent of the public libraries served nearly 71 percent of the population of legally served areas in the United States (derived from tables 1A and 1B). Each of these public libraries had a legal service area population of 50,000 or more.
- A total of 1,480 public libraries (over 16 percent) had one or more branch library outlets, with a total of 7,124. The total number of central library outlets was 8,923. The total number of stationary outlets (central library outlets and branch library outlets) was 16,047. Nine percent of public libraries had one or more bookmobile outlets, with a total of 966 bookmobiles.
- Nearly 54 percent of public libraries were part of a municipal government; almost 12 percent were part of a county/parish; nearly 6 percent had multi-jurisdictional legal basis under an intergovernmental agreement; almost 11 percent were non-profit association or agency libraries; over 3 percent were part of a school district; and 8 percent were separate government units known as library districts. Over 1 percent were combinations of academic/public libraries or school/public libraries. About 6 percent reported their legal basis as "other".
- Over 80 percent of public libraries had one single direct service outlet, (an outlet that provides service directly to the public). Just under 20 percent had more than 1 direct service outlet.
- Nearly 70 percent of public libraries were a member of a system, federation, or cooperative service, while over 28 percent were not. Over 2 percent served as the headquarters of a system, federation or cooperative service.

### *Operating Income and Expenditures*

- Over 78 percent of public libraries' total operating income of about \$5.9 billion came from local sources, over 12 percent from the state, 1 percent from federal sources, and close to 9 percent from other sources, such as gifts and donations, service fees, and fines.
- Nationwide total per capita operating income for public libraries was \$23.37.<sup>1</sup> Of that, \$18.26 was from local sources, \$2.84 from state sources, \$.23 from federal sources, and \$2.03 from other sources. Per capita operating income from local sources was under \$3 for close to 12 percent of public libraries, \$3 to \$14.99 for over 48 percent, and \$15 to \$29.99 for over 27 percent of public libraries. Per capita income from local sources was \$30.00 or more for 13 percent of libraries.
- Total operating expenditures for public libraries were over \$5.5 billion in 1996. Of this, over 64 percent was expended for paid staff and just over 15 percent for the library collection. The average U.S. per capita operating expenditure for public libraries was \$21.98. The highest average per capita operating expenditure in the 50 states was \$38.19 and the lowest was \$9.42.
- Close to 38 percent of public libraries had operating expenditures of less than \$50,000 in 1995; over 38 percent expended between \$50,000 and \$399,999; and close to 24 percent expended \$400,000 or more.

### *Staffing and Collections*

- Public libraries had a total of 117,812 paid full-time equivalent (FTE) staff. Of these over 23 percent were librarians with the ALA-MLS, and nearly 10 percent were librarians by title but did not have the ALA-MLS. Close to 67 percent reported their staff as "other".
- Nationwide, public libraries had over 711 million books and serial volumes in their collections or 2.8 volumes per capita. By state, the number of volumes per capita ranged from 1.5 to 5.2 (table 6).
- Nationwide, public libraries had collections of over 25 million audio materials and over 13 million video materials.

### *Services*

- Total nationwide circulation of public library materials was over 1.6 billion or 6.5 per capita. Highest statewide circulation per capita in the fifty states was 12.4 and lowest was 2.8.
- Nationwide, over 10.5 million library materials were loaned by public libraries to other libraries.

- Total nationwide reference transactions in public libraries were over 284 million or 1.1 per capita.
- Total nationwide library visits in public libraries were over 1 billion or 4 per capita.

***Children's Services***

- Nationwide circulation of children's materials was nearly 571 million or close to 35 percent of total circulation. Attendance at children's programs was over 42 million.

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<sup>1</sup> Per capita figures are based on the total unduplicated population of legal service areas in the states, not on the total population of the states.